

Living Memories Interviews with Cyril Waiton 9th and 15th September 2008 Interviews conducted by John Millington

Cyril was born in 1920 in Bradley Square, Tickhill. The square is now demolished, but used to stand near Sunderland Place.

Bradley Square comprised two rows of four cottages . Downstairs was a small kitchen and a living room. Upstairs were two bedrooms; one for mum and dad, the other for the children . There was no running water and the house was lit by candles. Fresh water was obtained from a pump in the yard. *“The toilets were middens then, they were the earth toilets, just up the yard with wooden seats”*. Under Cyril’s house was a coal cellar.



Cyril remembers some of the residents of Bradley Square. There was Mr. Butcher, who had an unmarried daughter called “Jaq”. She used to take him , *“high up”* in a horse and trap to the farrier’s at Harworth, where he watched horses being shod. There was “Blind Billy” who had a donkey, and an old lady called Harriet who had a small shop. There was also a man called Arthur Needham who worked at Maltby pit; a bricklayer called Mr. Atkinson who had suffered as a result of the war and a Mr. Plaice.

Here, Cyril spent the first seven years of his life before moving to Vine Street.



Cyril’s Impression of Bradley Square, from Sunderland Street. The Square was through the archway. The Waiton family lived in the left hand cottage that faced the main road . The “bothy” on the extreme left was Taylor’s Lodging House, where vagrants stayed. Opposite was Vine Road, four cottages and a shop. To the extreme right, through the gate, were allotments.

Cyril’s father, Ralph, had originally worked, as a groom, on the Sandbeck Estate before joining the Veterinary Corps during the First World War. After the war, Ralph worked for a short time at Maltby pit, before becoming a Lengthsman in Tickhill. As a Lengthsman, along with a Mr. Ainley, he was responsible for clearing drains; sweeping footpaths, cutting back the lime trees on Bawtry Road and cutting the grass verges, with a scythe. His area went as far as Hesley, both sides of the road, and round the corner towards Harworth , as far as a quarry , *“where the riding school is now”*. He also covered Bawtry Road as far as Swinnow Wood. Cyril comments that his father earned *“A small wage...a very small wage”*, especially with, eventually, a family of ten to feed.

Cyril's mum was called Sarah Ann. Ralph was her second husband as she was a war widow, who already had four children. Her deceased husband was George Bradshaw who was also from Tickhill. She was to have a further four children, of whom the first was Cyril.

Sarah Ann "**was a very good manager,**" and kept her family fed economically.

"We all had to be so so, you know. If you went to the table, there was no chatter, you had to eat what you were given or leave". One of the dishes Cyril remembers is a sheep's head stew with lentils. This fed the whole family.

Sarah Ann shopped at Jarvis's, which had a bakery, and at the Coop. Cyril remembers his Coop Number which was 10430. Meat could be obtained at Woodcock's (now Fenton's); Dawson's (now Eaton's) or Higgins' in the Red Lion Yard.

On wash days and for baths, water was heated in a copper by the fire. Laundry was done in a tub with a rubbing board and a poncher, (a piece of bell shaped copper on a long handle) which was used to pound the clothes in the washtub. The excess water was squeezed out with a cast iron mangle with wooden rollers. All this equipment was kept inside the house. The children had a bath on Sunday mornings.

The children slept in one bedroom. **"All us four (Waitons) would be in one bed and all the other four (Bradshaws) in the other"**.

Cyril started at the infants school in Tithes Lane (pronounced "Tiths") at the age of five.

His mother took him on the first day. **"I remember my mother taking me up... into the school yard. There used to be a stone gate post. I remember sitting on it, and my mother left me to it."**

The Headmistress was Mrs. Shaw, who was assisted by Miss Ivor Jenkinson, and an infant teacher, whose name he does not recall. The school comprised three classrooms, and the infant room was the smallest. The Caretaker, Mr Addy, lived on the premises.

At first, schoolwork was done on slates, so that it could be rubbed off and repeated. When a fair copy was produced paper was provided.

While at school Cyril developed a love of the game of cricket, and also a love of gardening. His dad had encouraged him to plant seeds in the garden at home, and expressed himself as happy with the results. There were gardening lessons, later, at the National School with Mr. Franklyn, who came from Sandbeck. These lessons took place on the "Wongs".

As a boy, Cyril had trouble with his ears. They swelled, were painful, and made him deaf

"I was never taken to t' doctor's when I was younger 'cos you had to pay for it" he says, but **"My mother used to treat us"**. There was goose grease for bronchial ailments, Beechams pills. For coughs and colds and brimstone and treacle for bowel disorders.... **"Come here get this down you"**. Was a frequent cry in the Waiton household, and noses were held so that the medicine went down.

Overall, in spite of having hearing problems, Cyril loved his schooling. And remembers all the teacher's names. One in particular- Miss Kirkland **"She could wield that cane better than any man"**. And she proved it one day to Cyril.

He enjoyed writing and he recalls **"making a good job of a composition"**. While he was working another pupil deliberately knocked an inkwell over it, and ruined his work. Naturally Cyril reacted violently and the boys were caned, **"on both hands"**. They took their punishment, but the matter was not over. It was settled with fists after school. **"We had a good do."** But, as Cyril observes, **"None of this knives job... marquis rules.... and you were always best of friends afterwards."**

At Christmas the school was trimmed up, and the usual activities took place. Carols were sung round the fire at home, and eight stockings were, hopefully, hung up on Christmas Eve. There was usually an apple and an orange. **"if you were bad you got some ash in it. But..if you got a ha'penny... by gum.. you were doing well."**

In winter time, Black Lane fields flooded from the Torme as far as the castle. When the water froze it was possible to slide to a pond which was at the back of the castle. One of the Jarvis family used to test the ice before anyone was allowed on it. Once approval had been given people of all ages skated there. ***"I was towed, by my step brother, on a little sledge. And he was skating pulling me on this sledge."***

Cyril also enjoyed ***"tripping about with the lasses round the maypole,"*** at the Mayday celebrations . There was a procession to the Buttercross, and the last May Queen he remembers, from his final year at school, was Hazel Hoyle, the Coalmerchant's daughter.

Cyril also remembers Lady Harrison Smith bringing oranges for the pupils on ShroveTuesday, (Pancake Day).

There were also treats when the family went to the cinema. The first film Cyril recalls was "Clancy of the Mounted", ***"where they always get their man."*** This was at the "Majestic", later the "Gaumont" cinema. On one occasion, the family sat down, the cockerel crowed to announce the beginning of the show, but Cyril's dad had fallen asleep and didn't wake up 'til the cockerel crowed at the end of the performance.

The "new" house in Vine terrace was bigger. It had a full size kitchen with big copper in the middle. Water was obtained from a pump in the yard and there was still no electricity. At the bottom of the garden was a pig sty.

Cyril's dad kept a pig which had two litters a year, and from these a piglet was kept. Cyril particularly remembers ***"Jenny....a beauty"***, which, after a wash and a rub down with sawdust, won first prize and was "highly commended" at Tickhill show.

Eventually, the day came when Jenny was slaughtered. ***.. "It used to be terrible,"*** says Cyril ***"We used to run like Billy O. They used to get a rope on her snout . They used to bring her out and she used to be squealing her head off. They used to get this old chap, to come and slaughter her, you know. Skittle her on t' scratch (this was a very strong wooden trestle) and used to cut her throat, you know . Then they used to put their hand in to stop the heart beating, They used to catch all the blood for black pudding you know, scrape all the hair off.*** Cyril adds that the slaughterman had to be ***"kettled up"*** but adds that ***"he was very quick and very clean"***.

One day, Cyril, as brothers often do, threw a "biggin" pebble into the air, intending it to startle his sister and two girls who were playing with her. Unfortunately it hit one of them on the head. ***"Did she scream"***, he says. Cyril ran and hid under some corrugated iron near the pigsty. It wasn't long before his dad came looking for him, and he seemed to know exactly where to look. Cyril broke cover and ran. So did his dad. "Far as you go, further I shall belt you back," he said. And he did.

In his final years at school, Cyril learned to milk at Castle Farm, which stood opposite the police station.. Mr. Brookfield, the farmer, and his dad were good friends. He used to milk two or three before going to school and a further two or three after school. Asked if he was paid for this, he said ***"One and six (7p).... Sometimes."***

Nearby, there was a smallholder who had a daughter who Cyril liked. He also had a few cows, and Cyril used to drive both herds down Water Lane and "split 'em" into various meadows.

"It's about time "you found a job and got to somebody else's table," said Cyril's dad, not long after he had left school. ***"The Nineteen thirties were terrible times. I was at home a month before I could get a job"***, recalls Cyril, though he did odd jobs in the locality.... ***"one and six here... a shilling there... sometimes nowt at all"***. Then Ralph heard of a farmer who might employ his son. The job interview took place at 5 o'clock in the morning and went as follows:-

"Na lad, What can you do?"

"Well, I can milk".

“Start five o’clock tomorrow.”

One morning Cyril was late for work. *“It couldn’t have been more than two minutes”*, he says.

“Where’ve you bin till now?”

“Coming”.

Well turn round and don’t come back ‘til you can come at the proper time.

This would have been a day’s pay lost. Cyril’s dad, who didn’t start work ‘til 7.30am, was sympathetic and had a word with the farmer in the “Millstone”. Cyril returned to work the following day, but comments that, in those days, you could be sacked for the slightest thing. He was working for six bob (30p) a week.

Cyril remained there for twelvemonths, and broadened his experience. He learned, by careful observation, to plough with horses “Dolly” and “Blossom”, but first, as a smallish lad of fourteen he had to learn how to harness them. First, the collar and then the bridle. Next the leather traces that were fastened to the trace chains, which, in turn, were fastened to the plough.

“I never needed a whipping line” he says, when talking of the horses he worked with. *“I just used to talk to them”*.

The following year found Cyril on a farm in Wickersley, living in., and earning “eight bob” (40p) a week. He went home at weekends and gave his mother his wage and she gave him two shillings (10p) spending money. He used to spend some of this on sweets and crisps at Ginny Thursby’s shop in Wickersley. In the evenings other farm lads and local girls used to meet up, and sometimes the lads decided to go to Thurcroft where they were often chased home by the miner lads who *“Thought we were after their lasses.”*

Cyril recalls that the farmer’s wife, Mrs. Stothard fed them well, but twelve months later he was on his way again. This time for twelve shillings a week. Now he was back in Tickhill working for a gentleman farmer called Mr Docherty.

At this farm, cattle were kept in a fold yard when the bad weather came. One winter job was the carting of manure and straw out to the fields. Ditches had to be kept clear. New hedges were laid and established hedges were pruned back.

“You used a brushing bill to trim hedges. Mine was sharp as a razor, and you always cut uphill. If they caught you cutting downhill, you were for it.”

These were **“testing times”**, known later as the “Hungry Thirties”, when jobs were very hard to come by, but Cyril stayed in work and was prepared, and able to turn his hand to most jobs. He did like working with horses and applied for a job as Second Horseman at a farm in Brodsworth. In the short time he had to wait he got a job laying the water pipes from Austerfield to Stancil. This was mainly done by Irish navvies, but Cyril’s job, along with another, was to melt lead in a cauldron; place a bar through the cauldron handle; and carry the molten lead that sealed the pipe joints to where it was needed. The molten lead was then poured into the clay mouldings made by the pipelayers.

Cyril got the job as second horseman. On one cycle journey to Brodsworth, his bike lamp went out before he left Tickhill. The Police at that time were very strict on cyclists without lights, so he walked, through Wadworth to Doncaster, and up the A1 to the farm. He describes this job as the most enjoyable one he ever had. Sadly, it only lasted a few months as his father died and he had to return to Tickhill.

Although times were hard, life had its lighter moments. Cyril went to the cinema and also went to ballroom dancing lessons at Madame Bullers, on St Sepulchregate. There were Saturday night dances in the Millstone, and, on one occasion Cyril and his partner danced the quickstep so well that the other dancers **“Left us on our own,”** and just stood round and watched.

Cyril now worked for Mr Walker. The new boss's instructions were "You eat well. I feed you well, and I want you to do t' same with my horses."

By this time it was 1938. Cyril left farming, and went to work for "Listcrete", casting kerb stones in concrete. Many of these went to aerodromes. This was very heavy work, but not when you had been used to carrying 16 stone grain bags up five steps into a thresher hopper. Some of the castings went to the Punch's Hotel in Bessacarr.

.It was while working at Listcrete that Cyril continued his interest in cricket. J J Lister. The owner of the company saw his employees playing football at dinner break and asked whether they liked cricket. He agreed that, if they could find somewhere to play he would buy the necessary equipment. The Foreman, Albert Battersby, knew a gardener at Hesley Hall and Lady Whittaker agreed to their team playing there on two conditions. One was that they paid a shilling a week to the groundsman, and the second was that there were no spectators. These were the days of the eight ball over and Cyril recalls taking five wickets in one over. Cyril also remembers F.C. Bagshaw playing for Tickhill in the nineteen thirties and hitting the ball over the two big limetrees that edged the field, and breaking tiles on the roofs of nearby farm buildings.

With the outbreak of war the country now needed agricultural workers, and Cyril returned to farming with Mr. Stothard, at Ravenfield. He was cycling past Foredoles Farm between Braithwell and Ravenfield when Sheffield was bombed. There was the sound of falling bombs and anti aircraft gunfire. And he took shelter in a ditch. On arriving at the farm he found the farmer in the stables trying to calm the horses. Later he went to bed and "*when I slept, I slept*" says Cyril. The next thing Cyril remembers is that it was morning, and the farmer was shaking him awake. A bomb had exploded about three hundred yards from the farm. Cyril had slept through this, but, unaccountably, his bed had turned completely round. "*The bed was skew wiffed, but I never heard 'em.*"

One day, Cyril and his step brother were playing darts in White's Passage off Westgate. Later that day Cyril was supposed to be going to Nottingham with his mother. But, "*a lass came next door. She could play darts,*" says Cyril. He decided not to go to Nottingham with his mother, and eventually courted Ivy, who was a cook, in service in Altrincham, Manchester. Her home was in Wadworth, and it was in Wadworth, in 1942 that Ivy and Cyril were married. When asked the name of the vicar who married them, Cyril replies "*I don't know, I weren't really bothered.*"

As a young married man, Cyril got a job at a farm in Thurcroft and lived in a cottage there.

Horses still did the heavy work, but on this farm Cyril was the cowman, in charge of the care and milking of ten cows. Milking was still done by hand and he was responsible for washing the cows' udders, and then pouring the milk through the coolers. "*Ayrshires give richer milk than Friesians,*" he comments.

Near the farm, on the banks of the River Don was a "pitch and toss" ring. This "game" depended on betting which was illegal. This also caused quarrels and fights, and made poor men even poorer. But it was very popular, particularly among miners, and depended on the probability of two coins landing as two heads or two tails. At this time large crowds of men would gather to play and often there would be a police raid. Men dived into the Don to try to escape, but often there were police waiting on the opposite bank. Cyril did not take part and describes the participants as "*folks wi' more money than sense*".

Cyril also recalls army trailers, loaded with wrecked aircraft parking overnight at Fosters car park on their way North.

At this time Cyril joined to Home Guard, and also volunteered to be trained as a ack ack (anti aircraft) gunner for the batteries at Thrybergh. He recalls marching to Wentworth for manoeuvres, and taking part in marksmanship competitions.

By 1945. The Waiton family were back in the Tickhill area. He now had four children. The Fordson Major tractor had now replaced horses, and farming was becoming increasingly mechanised.

The winter of 1947 was particularly harsh and deep snow lay on the ground from January 'til March.

The snow drifts on the road to Rossington were ten feet deep, and on the tops of these drifts lay scores of frozen partridges and rabbits that had died of starvation. Livestock still needed to be fed. There were fourteen cattle. Paths had to be dug to the haystacks; trailers loaded, and work had to go on as best it could.

The ear trouble that Cyril had as a boy, was now creating problems and after spending three weeks in hospital, Cyril found himself out of work.

“Well, Cyril, you’ll be like an old car going to a garage. I think you’d better look for another job,” he recalls his employer saying.

“Alright Mr.” says Cyril **“They’ll never take these off me”** He shows his hands, and knows he can turn his hands to anything.

The problem was that Cyril’s family was in a tied cottage. At the time this was usual, and the cottage went with the job. Therefore, he had to be out. There was **“not a house to be had in Tickhill”**, he says, and the bailiffs were coming to turn them out.. **“But... We were never in. They can’t turn you out if you’re not at home”**.

Prior to the Saturday that the family was due to leave, Cyril went to see a local medical man. There was to be a Garden party that weekend, and he suggested that the councillors of Tickhill, and their families may not like the sight of his furniture in the road as they passed. Accommodation was found in a condemned house in Vine Terrace. His story has a happy ending because the Waiton family were eventually housed in the newly built Vine Road.

The Glass Bulb Factory was being built in Harworth. Here Cyril was to spend the next twenty five years. Cyril worked there when it was a building site, and laid the floors as well as doing some brick laying. Later he worked in the acid room where the bulbs were frosted.

Once again, redundancy threatened, but Cyril still had his hands and he worked for Sir Andrew Buchanan in the gardens and stables at Hodsock Hall. Skills acquired over a lifetime were put to good use. **“I’m not being big headed, but I could turn my hand to most things”**, he says.

However, the advent of such machines as the combine harvester, meant that fewer and fewer hands were needed on farms. When talking about harvest time Cyril speaks of reapers and binders; of turning cut hay by fork to help it dry; of making “haycocks” in the fields and loading, carting and stacking the hay all by hand.

When asked about harvest celebrations Cyril says that **“There was not a great lot... not round here. At thrashing time you sometimes got a piece of cake and a cup of tea”**.

Asked if there is anything he misses, Cyril refers to his beloved horses. **“I’d give anything to get a t’ back of a pair of horses and plough a furrow”** he says, **“Just to see if I could still do it. Half a bit meant go left; Gee back! Go right. And as they turned they’d just have a little nibble of the hedge.”**